COMMITTEE ON
ENERGY & COMMERCE
DEMOCRATS
RANKING MEMBER FRANK PALLONE, JR.
NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 28, 2017

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Pallone Urges Rapid Adoption of Next Generation Auto-Safety Features

Washington, D.C. – *Energy and Commerce Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) delivered the following opening remarks at a Digital Commerce and Consumer Protection Subcommittee hearing on "Self-Driving Cars: Levels of Automation:"*

Today's hearing gives us our first true opportunity to talk about what is happening now in automotive technology. While learning about the potential technologies of the future is exciting, understanding that there are products currently available that are saving lives and reducing injuries is paramount.

For the foreseeable future, human drivers are going to be driving vehicles on our roads, and so efforts to prevent crashes or protect drivers and passengers in a crash are vital. For example, advances such as the addition of airbags and electronic stability control to our cars have saved thousands of lives.

As I mentioned at this Subcommittee's November hearing on self-driving cars, we see technologies in today's marketplace, such as automatic braking, that have enormous benefits. So today, I urge all automakers to expedite the deployment of these braking systems into all new vehicles.

According to the Highway Loss Data Institute, it takes 25 years for a new feature to be on 95 percent of cars on our roads. Therefore, when we see something that works, we need to get it on vehicles quickly and it needs to be made standard on all makes and models, not just the most expensive ones.

Witnesses today will discuss other advances such as in lighting and blind spot detection that have promise. I hope these technologies can help prevent injuries and fatalities. And as with automatic braking, I encourage rapid deployment of any new features that are proven to be beneficial.

I also look forward to hearing about research into pedestrian and bicycle rider safety. As we learned at last week's hearing on smart communities, the number of people living in urban

areas is rising, and those areas have unique transportation challenges. I am also interested in hearing what new technologies can reduce injuries to rear-seat passengers. While injuries to drivers are still the most common, often our most vulnerable passengers are in the back.

Unfortunately, data on back-seat passengers is still limited, which hampers efforts to determine the effectiveness of features intended to protect them. Therefore, I encourage NHTSA, and all other stakeholders, to collect and share all relevant data on road safety. We need to be able to see trends and opportunities for safety improvements, for people riding in the back seats as well as drivers, front seat passengers, and others on the road. More information will also encourage innovation of new safety technologies.

Finally, I will close by continuing my push for “security by design” and “privacy by design” where security and privacy are not afterthoughts but built into the products from day one.

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